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Personal Protection: Firm Offers Security, Self-Defense Services

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Washington's average person on the street most likely is unaware of the possibility that some fellow pedestrians may be diplomats or business people living in the fast lane of international intrigue, involved with vast political or financial empires, carrying large amounts of currency and surrounded by a phalanx of armed bodyguards.

But the belief that such figures can be found in the nation's capital, as well as in other big cities, has led to the creation of several firms that offer them personal protection and tips on how to elude assailants.

One recent entrant to the field is a company in Fairfax whose services include "evasion-trained driving," "electronic detection [sweeps]," "domestic investigations," "international assignments" and "access to ransom and kidnap insurance."

The company, called Interforce, was formed by Jay Anderson, a former member of the D.C. and Prince George's County police departments; Donald Markle, a family therapist who is a part-time "bounty hunter," tracking down defendants who jump bail, and David Tynan, who spent 14 years working for the CIA in Africa and Central America.

The services for which Interforce receives the most requests, Anderson says, are personal armed bodyguard protection and "security analysis" of offices and homes for business people and their families, a process designed to make an individual's daily routine secure from risk of kidnapping or other foul play.

Anderson says he and his colleagues knew when they started their business that there was a need in Washington for such a service. But he says they were surprised at the nature of the contacts they've received.

"When we started looking into it last November, we were really startled at the amounts of money being offered," Anderson

said. The type of person who might feel especially vulnerable could be carrying large amounts of money in the country, for example.

But the typical customer, Anderson said, might be the president of a large company, for whom Interforce will do a security analysis.

Such an executive is "active in local affairs, written about in local papers so virtually everyone knows who he is," Anderson said. "He and his family should be looking for strange people in cars, things out of place . . . We tell them how to make the home more secure and how to develop driving skills that can help you if someone is trying to force you off the road."

One obstacle the company faces is a tangle of D.C. laws that essentially makes it illegal to enter the city as an armed bodyguard. Generally, according to Tynan, bodyguards label themselves chauffeurs, escorts or companions instead.

"There is currently a bill before the D.C. City Council to establish guidelines for this kind of activity, because the Secret Service and the D.C. police department are extremely—and rightly so—concerned about who comes into the District armed," Tynan said.

"This type of thing is very, very touchy in D.C. There are too many lunatics on the streets now. You don't need to bring them in from out of town."

Virginia and Maryland have a licensing procedure requiring bodyguards to prove they have certain qualifying credentials.

Tynan said the company expects to get some assignments during the World's Fair in Memphis this summer.

"We will give key executive protection to some high officials in a company that might be [a] target," Tynan said. "Say, with a manufacturer of pesticides, some [group] might say, 'I want to make a spectacle of this guy.'"